



# Imagining Los Angeles: A City in Fiction

*David M. Fine*

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## **Imagining Los Angeles: A City in Fiction** David M. Fine

The promotional literature that lured sun-starved mid-westerners to Southern California in the 1880s hyped the region as the New Eden. But the novelists who created our vision of Los Angeles soon began to see it as Dystopia rather than Utopia, a corrupt, unreal city foreshadowing and reflecting all that is wrong with America. Now in the first literary history of Los Angeles in more than fifty years, David Fine traces the history of the place through the work of the authors who have defined it in our imaginations. The book begins with the mythifiers Helen Hunt Jackson, author of the quintessentially romantic 'Ramona' (1884) and Mary Austin, whose 1917 novel 'The Ford' was the first fictionalisation of the theft of water from the Owens Valley that became famous sixty years later in the movie 'Chinatown'. The author devotes chapters to both early and later Hollywood novels, to crime and detective novels, and to immigrant, ethnic, and apocalyptic fiction, paying detailed attention to the fiction of Upton Sinclair, James M Cain, Raymond Chandler, Ross Macdonald, John Fante, Nathanael West, Aldous Huxley, Budd Schulberg, Christopher Isherwood, Alison Lurie, Norman Mailer, Joan Didion, Thomas Pynchon, Walter Mosley, James Ellroy, Kate Braverman, and Carolyn See. The city's history, its architecture, even its disasters are all part of the story.

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